

FIVE-YEAR PUBLIC EDUCATION PLAN OVERVIEW

◆ SITUATION ANALYSIS ◆

Stormwater public education campaigns throughout Los Angeles County have been implemented as part of the 1990 NPDES Permit and have shown success in increasing awareness about stormwater/urban runoff pollution. In fact, the breadth of knowledge gathered in the *Issues, Pollutants and Materials Report*¹ illustrates how much the stormwater/urban runoff prevention education movement has grown in the past several years.

Under the 1996 Permit, Los Angeles County and its 85 Co-permittees are required to develop and implement a stormwater/urban runoff public education strategy that will continue to raise the level of awareness of the almost 10 million County residents about stormwater pollution -- and *motivate* them to stop polluting.

County residents believe there is a problem -- 88% believe that the ocean, rivers and lakes are polluted.²

While research indicates that most people are willing to act in an environmentally responsible manner if given simple ways to change their behavior to avoid polluting our water bodies, most are unaware of the sources of pollution from everyday urban land use. People haven't made the connection that significant pollution is generated from their normal, everyday activities -- not simply from commercial and industrial sources.

Urban Runoff and Its Impact on the County's Resources

On a daily basis, millions of gallons of untreated water flush into regional lakes, rivers and the Pacific Ocean. On rainy days, it can jump to six billion gallons. These polluted flows cause public health and safety concerns at the beaches, and leave behind hundreds of tons of solid waste to be cleaned up, costing millions of dollars annually.

¹ Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Stormwater/Urban Runoff Public Education Program. *Research Report on Issues, Pollutants and Materials*. Prepared by: Rogers & Associates; Harris & Company, with Larry Walker Associates, Inc.; Pelegrin Research Group; Lang, Murakawa & Wong; Valencia, Perez & Echeveste. October 1, 1996.

² Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Stormwater/Urban Runoff Quality Management Program, Public Opinion Poll conducted by The Sierra Group, February 1995.

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Even after a generation of fighting water pollution, studies show the danger of illness to people swimming in waters near urban storm drain outfalls. The urban runoff that drains into the County's storm channels first litters and contaminates neighborhood streets and walks. Litter, fertilizers, pesticides, automobile soot and oil drippings, pet waste, and deteriorating leaves and plant debris not only make our communities unattractive, but also are swept untreated down the storm drains into our waterways.

In total, the impacts of stormwater/urban runoff pollution encompass:

- ◆ losses to the County's \$2 billion a year tourism economy
- ◆ health risks associated with swimming in areas near storm drain outfalls
- ◆ loss of recreational resources
- ◆ dramatic cost increases for cleaning up contaminated sediments
- ◆ impaired function and vitality of our natural resources
- ◆ losses to Southern California's commercial and sportfishing industry
- ◆ contamination to marine life

Stormwater pollution impacts fish and wildlife, human health, tourism and our economy ... and, in turn, our lifestyle.

Opportunities for the Five-Year Public Education Plan

In developing and implementing this Five-Year Public Education Plan, Los Angeles County and its 85 Co-permittees have an important opportunity to meet the basic requirements outlined in the NPDES Permit (Immediate Outreach, Industrial/Commercial Education Program, Five-Year Public Education Strategy) using methods that are cost-efficient and that effectively change behavior. Through a unified and coordinated effort, the County and Co-permittees can:

- ◆ change the mind-set of a large, diverse population and educate target audiences about solutions to stormwater pollution;
- ◆ create a broad-based model with a long-term vision for pollution prevention in large geographic areas;
- ◆ create synergy by unifying multiple pollution prevention efforts (such as recycling and household hazardous waste) rather than conducting individual, splinter programs;
- ◆ build bridges and forge partnerships that integrate city and jurisdictional programs, combine educational outreach with technical understanding, and leverage resources; and,
- ◆ document and prove that the education outreach effort resulted in a behavior change that substantially reduced pollution.

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Program Consensus

Consensus has been reached by the County and the Co-permittees that this program will be research-based. It will draw from the experiences and best programs of existing local, state and national programs, as well as create original qualitative and quantitative research to support the development of a comprehensive public education plan. The County and the Co-permittees support a united effort as the most viable and cost-effective way to achieve success.

Additionally, the County and the Co-permittees are in general agreement about the concept of a campaign overarching approach, “look” and tone that clearly and concisely identifies the program, breaks through the information clutter and, at the same time, allows tailoring by Co-permittees for specific needs.

Multiple pollution prevention efforts should be unified under one overarching approach -- economically implementing a multitude of small, splinter programs for stormwater, recycling, used oil and household hazardous waste.

Additionally, and of equal importance, the overarching approach should not be exclusive to stormwater pollution. Rather, multiple pollution prevention efforts -- solid waste recycling and disposal, household hazardous waste and used oil recycling -- should be coordinated within the overarching approach in their respective efforts and messages.

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Our Greatest Challenges

By collecting and analyzing the information detailed in the *Issues, Pollutants and Materials Report*, several overall challenges became apparent and have served as the impetus in formulating research and monitoring questions and methods. The research information gathered served as part of the foundation for the Plan development process, and on-going monitoring will allow for program adjustments throughout the five years. These overall challenges are:

- ◆ discovering exactly what motivates or influences behavior change in each target audience;
- ◆ deciding who to target within each audience segment; prioritizing audiences to maximize the budget;
- ◆ addressing the vast ethnic, cultural, geographical and socioeconomic diversity of the County; and,
- ◆ demonstrating that the education effort has indeed helped to reduce stormwater/urban runoff pollution.

Maximizing Public Education Budgets

The budget for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works Five-Year Stormwater/Urban Runoff Public Education Program is \$5 million, with the Co-permittees having individual budgets for local education efforts. While \$5 million appears to be a large sum of money, there are almost 10 million people in Los Angeles County to reach with stormwater pollution prevention messages over a five-year time period. With an audience of this size, the funds available to the overall effort -- even combined with the Co-permittees' funds -- must be allocated carefully and effectively so that each dollar is directed towards changes in behaviors. Therefore, targeted audiences, and the communications programs aimed at each of these audiences, must be prioritized according to their relative impact on pollution and their willingness to try new behaviors that will reduce the greatest amount of pollutants entering the storm drain system.

To maximize program impact and dollars spent, while responding to the minimum requirements of the NPDES Permit, activities should be prioritized and funded according to their relative ability to reduce the greatest amount of pollutants entering the storm drain.

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Certain individuals and groups contribute more to water pollution than others (e.g., do-it-yourselfers) and certain population segments are more likely than others to try new behaviors (e.g., systematic recyclers) and/or continue these behaviors if they are simple and easy to do. A segmentation study has identified the people who are most receptive to new ideas and behaviors, and those who would not, for a variety of reasons, try new behaviors -- even with multiple exposures to new information. The group of “hardcore/non-tryers” should not be primary targets as money would be more wisely spent on the more receptive audiences.³

Segmentation studies also have identified the types of messages, wording and communications tools that are most effective in motivating the receptive audience to make positive behavior changes. By targeting those people most likely to respond, and by using messages and tools that are meaningful to them, the County and Co-permittees have the greatest opportunity for producing the most positive impact on water quality in the most cost-effective manner.

Additionally, cost-effectiveness is enhanced through the overarching concept that incorporates flexible graphics providing a unified and consistent pollution prevention program look while allowing adaptability throughout the County by each Co-permittee. Certain overarching graphics can be provided to Co-permittees on computer disk or in camera-ready artwork that is adaptable to the geographic area, the message, and the specific environmental program.

Finally, there are many successful programs across the country that are valuable to the planning process. While Los Angeles County’s program is unique in its number of Co-permittees, other parts of the country have implemented pollution prevention programs and activities for large populations in large and diverse geographic areas, and these programs have been inventoried for reference and activity resources. In specific instances, some of these successful programs will serve as springboards or adapted starting points for the County and will eliminate spending money to replicate existing efforts.

³ See Section IV, “Segmenting the Target Audience” for detailed descriptions of the audiences being targeted in this Five-Year Public Education Plan.

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The Five-Year Public Education Plan -- In A Nutshell

- ◆ Founded on research
- ◆ Broad-based with an overarching approach
- ◆ Flexible, adaptable, cost-effective
- ◆ Provide simple, everyday actions that will make a difference
- ◆ Integrated and coordinated
- ◆ Results-oriented

“Think Globally ... Act Locally”

Part of the success of the Five-Year Public Education Plan will involve changing people's mind-set from strictly ocean clean-up to more of a neighborhood focus.

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◆ OVERALL GOALS ◆

- ◆ Reduce the amount of stormwater/urban runoff pollution in Los Angeles County.
- ◆ Build bridges and forge partnerships that integrate County, city and jurisdictional programs, appropriately mix educational outreach with technical understanding, and that will leverage resources.
- ◆ Improve general understanding of stormwater/urban runoff pollution and its prevention methods.
- ◆ Incorporate stormwater activities into other County environmental education programs by the end of the second year of implementation.
- ◆ Move existing County BMPs under the stormwater pollution prevention umbrella program by August 1998.
- ◆ Integrate the County stormwater overarching theme into a minimum of 35% of the Co-permittee programs by August 1998 and 50% by August 2000.
- ◆ Increase *awareness* of stormwater pollution prevention messages among the adult population to 83% in five years.

* *Note:* These percentage goals will be measured on a countywide basis.

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◆ STRATEGIES ◆

The following eight key strategies encompass all audiences and will drive the successful implementation of the Five-Year Public Education Plan:

Strategy 1: Overarching Approach

Develop a unified overall public education approach, “look” and message(s) that promote Los Angeles County’s overall stormwater/urban runoff goals. This overarching concept will be conducive to modular, flexible components tailored to specific audiences, Co-permittees, watershed management areas and individual programs (projects) to ensure consistent, cost-effective and easy utilization. The overarching approach and look will set the tone and feel for the overall public education program and, once established, will become the way all target audiences identify the program and its pollution prevention messages.

Strategy 2: Partnerships

Build bridges and forge partnerships that are conducive to maximum leverage of resources and that: (1) integrate County, city and jurisdictional programs; and, (2) the public and private sectors. Utilize every opportunity to work hand-in-hand with Co-permittees, local environmental groups, and other public and business organizations to maximize use of existing distribution outlets, events, programs and materials.

Strategy 3: Unified Pollution Prevention Efforts

Create synergy by unifying multiple pollution prevention efforts (such as recycling, used oil and household hazardous waste) under a single, all-encompassing agenda rather than conducting individual, splinter programs. Link all programs to the impact they have on stormwater pollution under “Project Pollution Prevention.”

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Strategy 4: Segment and Target Specific Audiences

Prioritize audiences and activities within each audience that will target the greatest potential polluters who (1) are the most likely to adopt change in their personal and professional behaviors, and (2) that will result in the highest pollutant removals in the most cost-effective manner.

Identify as primary targets those people who are most likely to attempt pollution prevention activities and to repeat their usage if the experience is positive, simple and convenient. While no one will be ignored, downgrade to a secondary level of importance those people who would not, for a variety of reasons, try to change their habits and behaviors and those people who have a minimal level of impact on stormwater pollution.

Strategy 5: Simple, “How To” Instructions Incorporated Into Everyday Routines

Develop specific guidelines supported by simple tasks and concise “how to” instructions that will motivate Los Angeles County residents and businesses to use pollution prevention actions in their “everyday” routines.

Strategy 6: Monitoring and Evaluation

Establish a monitoring and evaluation system to: (1) measure the effectiveness of the program by assessing the number of people who show increased awareness, intent and/or actions in reducing stormwater/urban runoff pollution; and, (2) ensure program components and outreach efforts are adjusted and enhanced on a regular basis in relation to what is working and what isn’t in the various communities and target audiences.

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Strategy 7: Implement Countywide, Supplement Locally

Develop an overall program with individual activities that impact pollution on a countywide basis. Utilize overarching materials for all audiences that are developed and implemented by the County, yet are supportable and supplemented on a local basis in a manner that meets Permit minimum requirements, is inexpensive and is effective.

Strategy 8: Multiple Audience Impact

Wherever possible, develop program materials and activities that are implementable with and have impact on more than one audience at a time.

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◆ OVERARCHING APPROACH ◆

As the focus groups hypothesized and the segmentation studies confirmed, in order to achieve maximum effectiveness, the communications program needs an overarching approach that provides consistent verbal and visual cues to the targeted audiences. The overarching approach is defined for the Five-Year Public Education Plan as a whole and remains consistent throughout the five years. However, the components within the phases that roll-out over the five-year time period will be fluid to reflect the evolving messages for each targeted audience. The overarching approach will provide a campaign identity, a personalized feel and applicable “how to” information on solving the stormwater pollution problem.

Benefits of the Overarching Approach -- Los Angeles County

- ◆ Builds a distinct and distinguishing identity that is visually impactful
- ◆ Sends clear, concise and applicable message to the target audiences
- ◆ Sets a consistent tone and feel for the entire communications program
- ◆ Provides specific information in a personal manner making it more identifiable to the recipient
- ◆ Creates unity between all pollution prevention programs (e.g., recycling, household hazardous waste, water pollution)
- ◆ Tailorable to and flexible for specific programs, localities, topics and messages

Benefits of the Overarching Approach -- Co-permittees

- ◆ Increases efficiencies in cost and production
- ◆ Enables Co-permittees to tie-in to the County’s program, if they choose, without feeling they are losing their own identity to a county or geographical name
- ◆ Raises the synergy and broadens the reach and impact of local campaigns through multiple communications contacts on a variety of levels -- community to countywide -- and through a variety of communications tools

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Overarching Approach

Research results say that 83% of the population will hear messages related to “doing the right thing” and will apply “how to” information educating them about alternative behaviors. Many of these people do not realize that some of their everyday behaviors are bad and that they cause stormwater pollution. These same people say if they only knew that what they were doing was bad, they would do something different if given alternatives.

This psychographic research supports the value of a “problem/solution”-oriented approach with strong, impactful visuals and an identifying “signature.”

Sample Problem	Sample Solution
A child gets sick.	Pick up animal waste; don’t leave it behind.
Fish are contaminated.	Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly.
The beach is closed.	Recycle automotive fluids, don’t pour them down the storm drain.

There are plenty of problems and the solutions are many. Target audiences will be able to identify and personally relate to at least one, if not more, of the problems. These residents are shown to be motivated by messages about protecting their children, the environment, and their health, and improving their neighborhoods. They also are likely to change their pollution-causing behaviors when shown the problem and given an applicable, simple solution.

Pictures have a greater emotional appeal than words, and these sample problems and solutions will be supported by high-impact visuals. The identifying “signature” will be Project Pollution Prevention which is discussed further in this section.

Common Elements of the Overarching Approach

- ◆ An identified problem caused by stormwater pollution
- ◆ An identified solution(s) to the particular problem
- ◆ Campaign theme tagline
- ◆ A personal approach drawing from a person’s desire to do the right thing “if they only knew”
- ◆ 1-888-CLEAN-LA hotline number (local hotline numbers can be added for Co-permittee tailoring)
- ◆ Project Pollution Prevention identifying signature (city logo/name can be included for Co-permittee tailoring)

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Campaign Signature

As a unifying component within the overarching approach, following is the “signature” that will be used in advertising, collateral materials, media relations and other campaign components to identify a united alliance in preventing pollution in all communities around Los Angeles County.

Potential adaptations/usage in advertising and collateral materials include:



County signature:

County of Los Angeles (seal optional)
Project Pollution Prevention

Co-permittee signature:
(example only)

City of Long Beach (w/logo, optional)
Project Pollution Prevention

STOPP signature:

East Los Angeles
Project Pollution Prevention
“Clean Communities for Economic Growth”